DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 678 CS 204 331

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TITLE Coorientation in the Newsroom: An Analysis of the News Preferences of Reporters, Editors, and Publishers.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (61st, Seattle, Washington, August 13-16, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Decision Making; *Interaction Process Analysis; Interprofessional Relationship; Journalism; Literature Reviews; *Newspapers; *News Reporting; Performance Factors; Policy Formation; Press Opinion; *Staff Role
IDENTIFIERS *Communication Research; *Dyadic Communication

ABSTRACT

The question of whether publishers' news preferences affect the performances of editors and reporters is examined in this paper. The first section reviews studies of ways the newsroom environment has affected reporters' role assumptions; it then notes that previous studies have generally been monadic (focusing on only one person) and have provided little insight into role interactions in the newsroom. The second section shows how the coorientation model of communication was used in a dyadic study in twelve Indiana newsrooms, in which the following coorientation relationships were investigated: agreement between reporters' and editors' news selections; congruency between reporters' selections and their perceptions of how their superiors would select the news; and accuracy of reporters' perceptions of their superiors' news selections. Among the findings presented in the paper were that reporters and editors seem to operate independently of each other, that reporters pay more attention to their own convictions than to those of their editors and publishers, and that the news play of editors and publishers is very similar. (GW)

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COORIENTATION IN THE NEWSROOM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS PREFERENCES OF REPORTERS, EDITORS, AND PUBLISHERS

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Presented to the Theory and Methodology Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Seattle, Wash., August, 1978.

CS204331

COORIENTATION IN THE NEWSROOM: AN ANALYSIS
OF THE NEWS PREFERENCES OF REPORTERS,
EDITORS, AND PUBLISHERS

For as long as editors, reporters, and publishers have been working together, the question of whether publisher news preferences (policy, if you will) affects the performance of editors and reporters has been a point of contention. And although communication researchers have been looking at these three major roles in the newsroom for three decades, actual study of the policy question involving these three roles "simultaneously" has not been attempted directly by researchers. Reporter research has shown how stress affects his writing; how sources affect his attitudes, perceptions, and writing; and has even analyzed his personality to see why he performs the way he does. His professional values have been scrutinized, and the organization around him has been analyzed to better understand the problems and frustrations that he faces based on the size of the organization to which he belongs.

The role, skill, and personality of editors has been researched in much the same way. And in the publisher studies that have been conducted, we know who their friends are, and in what situations we can expect them to exert some influence in the newsroom. However, since these studies have generally been monadic in nature, i.e. focusing on only one person for the most part, researchers have given us little insight into the role interactions in the newsroom that produce the type of news we read each evening in our daily newspapers, or see on our TV sets. Media critic Ben Bagdikian has vocalized a need for such studies:

> There is needed, for example, a careful set of parallel studies of social perceptions of owners, publishers, editors, and various levels of working staffs. Until this is available, knowledge of the complicated interaction of these people to produce news absorbed by the public have to depend on reference to older studies such as Breed's or on individual and impressionistic reports (1).

Without pretending to present a grandiose scheme to conduct such a study that will provide answers for such a complicated question, this paper will assess historically, and briefly, some of the studies conducted concerning reporters and how the newsroom environment has affected their role assumption. Then it will present the findings of a study completed in Indiana newsrooms, which attempted to determine if the news selection patterns of publishers are mirrored in the news selection patterns of editors and reporters on the same newspaper.

Related Literature

In 1937, when Leo Rosten was conducting interviews for his classic study, The Washington Correspondents, he attempted to determine if newspaper management exerted influence over reporters, Rosten said that during his work one question was asked of him more often than any other: "How free is a newspaperman to write the news as he honestly sees and understands it?" In an attempt to answer that question, Rosten asked the correspondents in his study to respond to seven statements about publisher policy from several different points of view. As an example, one statement read: "I am not aware of any definite, fixed 'policy.'" He found that thirty-two percent of his subjects agreed with the statement, while sixty percent disagreed, and seven percent were undecided (2).

Based on his findings, Rosten reported that reporters were not working for their audiences, necessarily, but were working to survive and succeed in the newsroom. Subsequently, the Commission on Freedom of the Press echoed Rosten's findings, although they were addressing the larger problem of public access. To the Commission, it was the owners and managers of the press who determined which facts and ideas would reach the public; a situation more serious to the Commission than probable transgressions by the government (3).

Although Warren Breed's study is considered to be one of the landmarks of investigation in this particular subject area, Charles Swanson helped lay the initial groundwork for such studies in a series of articles he produced in the 1940's.

Swanson picked a midwestern city for his series of studies and he administered instruments to thirty executives, sub-editors, reporters, and photographers. He concluded that managing editors had the most control over news, followed by city editors and editors. Publishers ranked fifth, newsmen's personal views ranked seventh, and space in the newspaper, thirteenth out of fourteen items. He decided that some member of the editing-wirting group shared in every daily news decision made at the paper (4).

Warren Breed's study of 120 newsmen in the northeastern part of the U.S. was one of the first to assess the existence of publisher policy in the newsroom. Breed was concerned with how newsmen learned policy, why they conformed to it, how they deviated from it, and what some of the consequences of the pattern were.

Breed concluded, in part, that the reporter's source of reward was located among his peers in the newsroom, thus "he redefines his values to the more pragmatic level of the newsroom group."(5)

Judd's study of reporters on a West Coast Suburban newspaper led him to believe that reporters looked to their superiors for more than news values sometimes. Reporters, who seemed to let their newsroom world engulf their sources, and even their families, generally relied on city editor perception of audience needs and demands. This reliance was seldom challenged by the reporter, according to Judd (6).

Stark conducted a study similar to Breed's except that his subjects were confined to one American newspaper in a metropolitan area with over 200,000 circulation. He determined that two types of reporters were in evidence--pros and locals (Stark's labels). Stark found the pros to be better educated, better dressed, well-traveled socially and professionally, more liberal toward other newspapers and their staffs, from middleclass backgrounds and above, more oriented toward literature and the arts, and less company oriented than the locals. However, the locals were usually the editors because of their loyalty to the publisher. The pros resented such a practice since they felt more qualified for the jobs, but less inclined to take them because of company policies. Stark concluded that such a situation in the newsroom led to a violation of newsmen's values because of policy, which distorted what the staffers perceived as the true news to be (7).

Two studies by Geiber suggest that newsroom climate is important to newsmen. In the first study, he interviewed reporters and sources from five California newspapers in order to examine their judgements and perceptions of each other. He found reporter frustrations revolving around craft problems, not story problems. Reporters had perceptions of their audience, but they probably wrote for their editors, or fellow newsmen, if they had an audience in mind (8).

A second study of twenty-two reporters by Geiber uncovered reporter frustration again, because the reporters felt they were not allowed to dig for stories into situations that challenged their curiosity. Geiber concluded that the fate of a news story was not determined by the needs of the community, but by the demands of the reference group to which the reporter belonged (9).

Tichenor, et al., analyzed seventy-five articles and interviewed seventy-three scientific sources and sixty-seven reporters to determine role performances and interaction among reporters, editors, and scientists as they related to the accuracy of audience understanding of media messages. In part, the authors found that articles initiated by reporters were less accurate than those articles assigned by editors, or those articles that originated from press releases or journal articles. They concluded that "specific editor interest was a crucial factor in reporter performance, and . . . editors present both an energic and control factor," in the newsroom (10).

The effects of policy in the television newsroom has been the subject of studies by Warner and Garvey. Warner studied policy in the television newsrooms of three major networks in this country--NBC, ABC, and CBS. He found that lower members on the organization ladder tended to structure output more if editors give poor information; tended to deviate from policy more if it was vaguely stated; tended to structure those stories which they initiated; tended to receive greater latitude from the organization as their professional status increased; and tended to tolerate deviance more as the collective nature of the work tasks became greater (11).

Garvey attempted to test in three television newsrooms the Breed assertion that reporters absorb management news policy in their own evaluative systems as part of their socialization into the newsroom. He concluded that staff members do absorb the managerial viewpoint over years, but that the relationship between the two variables was curvilinear. This finding contradicted the Breed study somewhat, because Breed suggested that as reporters grew older they "mellowed" toward company policy. Garvey found evidence that individual staffer story ratings conformed more closely with how the station manager actually perceived the stories, than how the staffer thought the manager would rate the stories. Such a finding would seem to suggest that television staffers had absorbed more policy than they were aware (12).

In the past few years, sociologists have taken a renewed interest in the Breed study, and they have reexamined the effects of organizational structure on the socialization of the newsman in the newsroom. Sigelman observed reporters on two newspapers in a "Southeast City," and basically disagreed with the findings of Breed, Stark, and Warner. Sigelman felt these studies to be too narrow in focus and they overstated the conflict between reporter and newspaper management.

In Sigelman's judgement, newsroom policy did not exist for the sole purpose of circumscribing the adversary relationship between reporter and management; since in his test city, reporter political leanings were not a prerequisite for employment. Although management did extend autonomy in some degree to those in agreement with company policy, basically management used selective recruitment and socialization for conflict avoidance. Newsroom policy assured the newspaper of objective reporting from newsmen and favorable attitudes and performance (13).

A recent sociological study by Johnstone, which was the first national journalism survey of its kind, found that a majority of subjects do recognize organizational constraints over the initiation and final acceptance of their work. The author found about three-quarters of all reporters claimed a free-hand in the newswriting stage, six out of ten had complete freedom in selecting their own stories, less than half created their own assignments, and only about a third could claim that they were the only ones to edit their stories. Moreover, Johnstone

determined that reporters working on the largest newspapers could claim only autonomy at the newswriting stage while their counterparts on the smaller papers claimed autonomy in all three phases of the news writing process (14).

Kerrick, Anderson, and Swales assessed the direct affect of policy on "newsmen." Using college students, the authors found that whenever policy was invoked for the students, it affected their stories no matter what the writer's attitude. Only when no policy or contrived bias entered into the picture did the writer's attitude determine the bias in the story. Surprisingly, they found that those writers who agreed with policy were more able to be fair to the opposing point of view than the reporters whose own views opposed policy (15).

Using medicare as a stimulus issue, Donohew used content analysis and publisher interviews to ascertain whether publisher and/or perceived community opinion influenced the behavior of gatekeepers concerning the social issue. He concluded that "publisher attitude appeared to hold up as the greatest 'single' force operating within the news channel." He found that those newspapers which were favorable to medicare in most instances had publishers who also favored the issue. Such papers tended to be the larger ones in his study (16).

To study of the question of publisher direction of news in use, content, and display, Bowers sent a questionnaire to managing editors of all U.S. evening dailies. Generally, he found that the larger the circulation the less active the publisher was

in the newsroom. Publishers did get involved, though, in money issues, more often than any other issue including social issues. And Bowers detected that the closer the news came to involving the newspaper or the publisher, the more interested the publisher became (17).

Atwood concerned himself with patterns of news preferences of one newspaper's staff and a sample of its subscribers. He sought to determine if newsmen and subscribers had similar perceptions of each other's news preferences. He found that the news values of the newsmen and subscribers were more homogeneous than those preferred by desk-bound newsmen and subscribers. The publisher in Atwood's study displayed news perceptions similar to those of newsmen and subscribers, the group which contained the most participants in the study (18).

Although all the studies discussed here have emphasized the existence of policy in the newsroom, a study by Flegel and Chaffee seems to be contrary to previous findings. They queried thirteen reporters on two Wisconsin Newspapers to determine if reporters would stress news values over their own personal views, the views of their editors, or the views of their readers. They found that although intrinsic news values (new and unusual aspects, local angles, and importance) had the greatest influence on reporters, reporters felt their own personal opinions were more important than those of their editors and readers (19). Flegel and Chaffee also underscored in their study some of the drawbacks of previous reporter studies:

> Only in this study (Flegel and Chaffee's) and that of Pool and Shulman has there been an attempt to gather and to validate self-descriptions by reporters of their thoughts as they encode messages. No one can learn much about the reporters so long as they cling to the methodological assumption that they are nothing more than units of analysis to be observed from a distance (20).

The participant observation studies of Breed, Stark, Warner, Sigelman, Geiber, and Judd, to name a few, assessed the nature of policy in the context of the newsroom. Those studies observed reporter performance, but did not measure it. Of all the studies that have been conducted, few have tried to quantify the performance of reporters, editors, and publishers in the same newsroom, and in the same context. Although researchers have said that publishers have influence in the newsroom, very few, if any, have looked at the performance of these three groups simultaneously. And, as mentioned at the outset, the majority of reporter studies have been monadic in nature. Few studies have investigated the individual dynamics involved strictly in the newsroom environment, or have been dyadic in scope in the newsroom.

In order to structure an dyadic experimental study, it was necessary to seek a methodological approach which would lend itself to such considerations. The coorientation model of communications suited the needs of this study. Creators McLeod and Chaffee point out:

> A coorientation model of communication includes variables that a single-person model omits. We assume that each person in the coorienting pair has two distinguishable sets of cognitions: he knows what he thinks, and he has some estimate of what the other person thinks (21).

Their approach is to measure the interaction between pairs of individuals in an attempt to assess the degree of communication or understanding that transpires between them. Three separate variables can be constructed from comparisons among the two separate sets of cognitions that each individual has. Once tasks have been given to subjects in a study, then the investiagator can determine the degree of accuracy, congruency, and agreement between pairs of individuals.

This approach can be easily applied to a newsroom environment as a recent study in Wisconsin illustrates. Martin, O'Keefe and Nayman asked sixty-five editors from thirty-four Wisconsin dailies to rate on a self-administered questionnaire their own position on six topics; and in a second try, rate how they felt their own community would respond. The authors had 432 newspaper subscribers follow the same procedure. The authors found that although editors were generally accurate in judging direction of community beliefs on some issues, editors showed the tendency to overestimate the distance and direction of those beliefs. Agreement between editors and readers was relatively poor. The authors felt that the editors seemed to be making news judgements on perceived majority opinion rather than on actual community opinion. Editors thought they could do a better job of estimating community positions on issues than they did, while the readers thought they were less in agreement with newspaper positions than they were (22).

If we make use of the assumptions expressed by Chaffee and McLeod, then we can assume that reporters, editors, and publishers, not necessarily in that order, communicate daily as they complete the required tasks for producing a daily newspaper. Reporters and editors, specifically, have two sets of cognitions concerned with tasks that each faces. When it comes to selecting the news, reporters have their own ideas of what constitutes news, but they also have some inkling of what constitutes news for their editors. Research studies have implied that reporters are faced with a personal conflict because of those two sets of cognitions. On the one hand, they know what they like in the way of news; but on the other hand, since they think they know what the editor wants, they try to give it to him. Frankly, the reporter, if he wishes to continue in employment, carries out the wishes of his superiors. Or, as Rosten says, the reporter can in a sense work both sides of the street, in that he knows what his editors want, but be is also able to use his experience in order to give the news a slant that will hopefully enhance his career (23). How congruent his own news selections are with how he perceives his editor's news selections can be measured by means of the coorientation model. Similarly, the degree of accuracy exhibited between the reporter's perceptions of his editor's news selections, and his editor's actual news selections can also be measured.

Of the three variables explained by Chaffee and McLeod, probably accuracy comes closest to being synonymous with policy in the newsroom. If we can make the assumption that a reporter

is playing a role in the newsroom then the coorientation suggestion that he has two cognitions about an event takes on new meaning. This would imply that the reporter has his own feelings about what is news, but in order to carry out his role tasks, he makes use of his perceptions of his editor's news preferences in order to survive in the newsroom. A measure of accuracy between a reporter and his editor does not necessarily constitute the degree of policy acquisition by the reporter. But, if we add the news selections of the publisher into the coorientation model, then by tracing the publisher's news selections simultaneously as we trace the news selections of editor and reporter, we might have some idea of how similar publisher news selections are to others in the newsroom. By keeping in mind the assumption that some communication has already transpired between reporters, and editors, and publishers, we can begin to get an inkling of how the news selection process operates in the newsroom environment.

Based on the literature review, and the coorientation approach, some research hypotheses were constructed in order to shed some light on the similarities and differences between the news selections of reporters, editors, and publishers. Coorientation relationships tested included: agreement, or the measure of similarity between the reporter's own news selections and the editor's own news selection; congruency, or the measure of similarity between the reporter's own selections and how he perceives his superior would select the news; and accuracy, or the

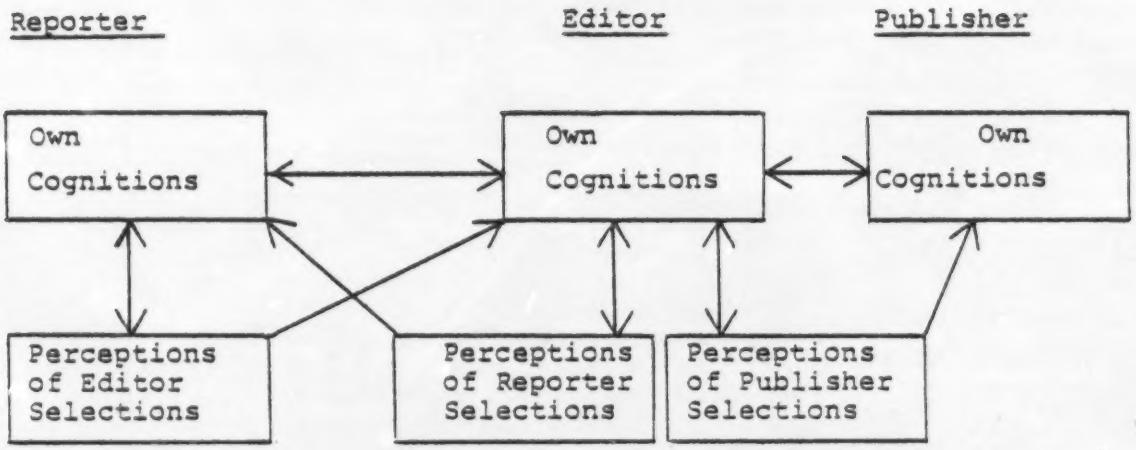

Figure 1 -- Schematic Representation of Coorientation Variables

the measure of similarity between the reporter's perceptions of his superior's own news selections and his superior's own news selection. The hypotheses were based on the coorientation model which had been designed for this study (see figure 1).

Hypotheses tested included:

1) Reporters own selection of news stories would be congruent with what he perceived that his immediate supervisor would select in the same situation.

Most of the policy studies conducted have come to the conclusion that news selection policy generally supercedes other variables in the newsroom environment. Breed suggests it is so pervasive that it becomes a value to reporters in the newsroom (24). It has been suggested by Sigelman (25) that older newsmen pass on such values to younger newsmen, and they are encouraged to do so by publishers. If that is the case, then a reporter's own selections should be congruent with what he perceives his editor

would select under the same circumstances. Such a finding would suggest that the reporter has assimilated editor values as his own, particularly since the reporter has consciously reported his own cognitions and his perceptions of how his editor would select the same stories. If there is a difference between the two measures, then it will be necessary to measure reporter agreement with his editor in order to better understand the degree of communication that has transpired between the two.

2) Reporter perceptions of editors' own news selections will be as accurate as editors' perception of publishers' own news selections.

By measuring both the accuracy of the reporter's perceptions of editor's own news selection, and the accuracy of editor perceptions of publisher news selections, some evidence of how similar the publisher's news preferences are with other members in the newsroom will be available. This hypothesis is consistent with the major policy studies that have been carried out by Breed, Swanson, Gieber, Donohew, Bowers and others. They suggest that policy is very much in evidence in the newsroom even if the evidence is not necessarily tangible. If that is the case, then reporter and editor accuracy should be very similar. But, if accuracy between the three parties is low and inconsistent, then it must be assumed that publisher news selections are different from others in the newsroom.

3) Editors will perceive more accurately publishers' own news selections than reporters' own news selections.

This hypothesis suggests that editors, as a part of management generally, will know what the publisher wants in terms of news selections. Again, this hypothesis is consistent with the general finding the policy rules the newsroom. And the reporter, as the low man in the newsroom hierarchy, seldom finds an audience for what he perceives as news. His immediate superiors will generally have a better idea of what upper management might wish to see in the newspaper.

4) Editors' and publishers' agreement on own news selections will be greater than agreement between editors and reporters.

Some of the studies, namely Warner, Stark and Sigelman, suggest that editors have been chosen by publishers because they might have the same type of philosophy or outlook as the publishers. If that is the case, then could an editor's own selections of the news be similar to how his publisher selects the news? Agreement is hypothesized, and it should be greater between editors and publishers than between reporters and editors, because it is a generally accepted fact that reporters do not always agree with management. Sigelman suggests that reporters as a condition of employment, are not required to agree politically with management (26). But if the reporter, as Breed has pointed out, has assumed news to be a part of his values, then even the reporter's own news values will be influenced by the amount of policy in the newsroom (27). Hypothetically then, the reporter's own selections will be in agreement to some degree with the selections of his editor.

5) Editors' own news selections will be more congruent with how they perceive publishers' own news selections than how they perceive reporters' own news selections.

As a part of management, generally, the editor's ability to assume some idea of what his publisher wishes as news should be easily traced. This hypothesis suggests that editors will be more prone to have assumed the values of his superiors, than the news values of the reporters, who are lower in the hierarchy. It will be interesting to see if actual news selections of the editor are congruent with how he perceives what publishers and reporters would select as news stories. Although it is hypothesized that little discrepancy between editor and publisher story selections will be found, the question will be whether the editor has assumed as his own those news values displayed by the publisher.

For the purposes of this study, reporters were defined as those members of the newsroom whose main purpose was to collect, organize and write news on a daily basis. The editors chosen for the study were those members of management who were directly responsible for the performances of reporters, or who directed reporters in their daily tasks. And, from an operational standpoint, news selections by reporters, editors, and publishers were based on their perceptions of how their immediate superiors would play stories, rather than select stories. Hiett found completely different influences on editor story selections as compared to how they would play stories. He found that story content accounted for more variance in story play decisions by editors, while

story selection decisions by the same group were influenced more by mechanical factors (e.g. size of newshole, day of publication) than anything else (28).

Method

Research was conducted in the newsrooms of twelve daily newspapers throughout Indiana. First, publishers were contacted and asked to participate in the study. The project was described as a research effort designed to ascertain how various levels of newspaper management and reporters would play environment stories. Once the publisher consented to participation, he was sent the research instrument for information and for his responses, and an appointment time to visit the newsroom was set. The publisher's responses to the instrument constituted the first part of the study, and eleven publishers responded.

Once in the newsroom, the investigator made it clear that only volunteers would be asked to respond to the instruments. The procedures involved in the study were explained to reporters and editors individually. Reporters who volunteered were asked to respond to the instrument in two ways, but the second response method was not revealed to them until the first instrument had been completed. Reporters were asked to rate how they played each story. On the second trial, with the same instrument, they were asked to respond as they thought their editor would respond. From the twelve newspapers selected for the study, forty-seven reporters volunteered for the study.

Thirteen editors, who were actually supervisors for their reporters, participated in the study (29). Editors responded in three ways to the same instrument. First they were asked to respond as they actually felt the stories should be played. On the second attempt, they were asked to respond as they thought their publisher would actually play the stories. On the third attempt, they were asked to respond as they felt their reporters would respond. In each instance, editors were not pre-warned that they would be asked to respond to the instrument in a different way.

The selection of newspapers for the study was based upon two variables; circulation of the newspaper, and the amount of pollution in the local water supply based upon the actual fecal colliform count. Newspapers were divided into four circulation categories arbitrarily, and fecal colliform figures were obtained from the Indiana Stream Pollution Control Board. In the end, twelve dailies were selected with each daily representing one of twelve categories--four circulation and three water pollution categories (30).

The instrument, to which the subjects were asked to respond contained sixty-four story synopses concerning environment issues, which the subjects were asked to consider as local stories. Respondents were asked to rate each story as: 5) first news page, 4) first or second news page, 3) undecided on what play, 2) some other page, and 1) would not use at all.

Each story synopsis represented one of four basic factors, each an element in ecology issues. The factors were: nature, individual, corporate, and government. Four stories, two negative and two positive, were contrived from actual environment stories appearing in newspapers to represent each combination of factors. The structure of the stories was based upon a 4x4x2 factorial design. Ecology stories were chosen for two reasons: 1) They presented an issue of vital concern which had been elevated to national status by the federal government, and 2) as one issue, ecology stories cut across the elements and forces in the fabric of society, which meant stories ranging from the important to the trivial.

In order to make sure that the instrument was internally consistent with the definitions set forth for the study, a panel of four persons in environment-related careers were consulted and asked to review the instrument. Once the panel had suggested changes in the instrument, it was refined and made ready for the field experiment.

The instrument was used to collect the following demographic variables: newsman years in journalism, number of years in present position, possession of a journalism degree, age, education income, newspaper circulation, and chained/independent status of each newspaper. A community pollution index (fecal colliform figures) was also included.

Percent of ecology coverage for each newspaper was determined by measuring the number of column inches of environment stories in the total editorial newshole. This figure was compiled from a composite week. The five dates selected for a content analysis were drawn randomly from a pool of weekdays derived from the months of March, April, and May. Any newspaper material that was not advertising was considered part of the newspaper's editorial newshole.

All ten of the demographic variables were collected to ascertain whether they might have any relationship to the policy acquisition of reporters. Reporter accuracy scores were used as policy acquisition variables (criterion variable) in a multiple regression analysis. The purpose of the regression exercise was to see if knowledge of the demographic variables (predictor variables) would be helpful in predicting the degree of policy acquisition by reporters.

In order to compute the agreement, accuracy, and congruency scores needed to test the five hypotheses, D-scores were used. D-scores, as explained by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum are a measure of the dissimilarity between profile scores of groups, individuals, or individuals and groups (31). One of the advantages of such a measure over correlation coefficients, according to Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, is that the D-score takes into account the elevation, shape, and scatter of the profiles, thereby giving a more accurate picture of the information available in the data. D-scores also have one idiosyncracy which was taken

into consideration when interpreting the findings. They possess inverse properties which meant the smaller the computed D-score, the greater the similarity between the two profiles compared.

In computing D-scores for the hypotheses, each reporter was paired with his editor and each editor was paired with his publisher according to research design illustrated in Figure 1. In order to test the significance of the differences between the D-scores computed for the coorientation measures, the Wilcoxon match-pairs signed-rank test was used according to procedures outlined in Sigel (32). The level of significance for all tests of the coorientation variables was .05.

Findings

From the twelve Indiana dailies selected for this study, forty-seven reporters volunteered to be a part of the study. The average reporter in this study was 29.7 years old, and a college graduate; but he did not necessarily have a degree in journalism (36.2 percent did). He had been working for 3.4 years in his present job, and he had been in the journalism profession for 5.9 years. His average salary was $9,054.15, and he probably worked for a chain newspaper (64 percent).

The average editor in this study, for which thirteen volunteered, was 39.8 years old. For all intents and purposes, he was a college graduate (15.9 years of education), and he held a degree in journalism (54 percent). The editor had been in his present position over five years, and he had been in journalism altogether for about sixteen years. His present salary was

$14,716.33, and there was an even chance that he could either be the city editor or the managing editor by title as the person having direct supervision over the newspaper's reporters.

Of the eleven publishers responding to the study, the average age was 54.7 years. The average publisher had spent 8.2 years in his present position, and he had spent 27 years in the profession. He had 14.9 years of education, and did not hold a journalism degree (only 27 percent had one), if he had earned a degree at all. Publishers did not volunteer their annual salaries.

The twelve newspapers in this study ranged in daily circulation from 3,381 copies to 115,453 copies per day. Seven of the twelve newspapers (58 percent) were part of a chain operation (which is somewhat higher than the Indiana average for all its dailies). As a group, the newspapers devoted an average of 3.6 percent of their total newshole to environment coverage. Ten of the newspapers produced evening editions, and two produced morning editions.

The results of the computations for the coorientation variables--agreement, congruency, and accuracy--appear in Table 1.

In the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the measure between the reporters' own news play and his perception of how his editor would play stories would be congruent. Most of the policy studies conducted have come to the conclusion that news selection policy supersedes other variables in the newsroom

TABLE 1

D-SCORES FOR NEWSMEN COORIENTATION VARIABLES

Response	R	R-E	E	E-R	E-P	P
(1) Reporter Own	0.0	1.73	4.38**	4.22**	n/a	n/a
(2) Rep-Ed Perceptions		0.0	4.34**	n/a	n/a	n/a
(3) Editor Own			0.0	3.19	3.12*	3.85
(4) Ed-Rep Perceptions				0.0	n/a	n/a
(5) Ed-Pub Perceptions					0.0	3.93*
(6) Publishers Own						0.0

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

environment. By comparing the two sets of reporter responses, and testing for significance with the wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test, the distance between the reporter profiles was equivalent to zero (D=1.73, z=-0.85, p=.1977). In short, reporter own news play and his perception of his editor's news play was similar, and the congruency was based on the reporter's news play.

The second hypothesis was a test of whether reporter accuracy with editor own news play would be similar to those of editors and publishers. However, after testing for this hypothesis, reporters and editors in this study did not consciously perceive the news play of their superiors. The D-score for reporter-editor accuracy was 4.34 (z=-4.99, p=.001), and for editor-publisher accuracy the D-score was 3.93 (z=-2.096, p=.0183). Not only were those two accuracy scores significantly different, but the difference

between them was also significant (z=-3.01, p=.001).

In the third hypothesis, editors were expected to have better news play accuracy scores with publishers than with reporter own news play. With previous literature in mind, and assuming the accuracy variable to be the closest to acquired policy for newsmen in the study, editor accuracy of publisher own news play should have been high, and the result should have been similar for reporters. Results showed, however, that editors were not very accurate in perceiving either group's news selections. Editor-reporter accuracy scores produced a D-score of 4.22 (z=-5.53, p=.001), while editor-publisher scores produced a D-score of 3.93 (z=-2.096, p=.001). In terms of the relative value of the D-score in comparison with one another, these results tentatively demonstrated that although editors might perceive publisher news play somewhat more accurately than they perceive reporter news play, they really did a poor job of perceiving either group's news play.

Agreement between editors and publishers was predicted in this study (hypothesis four) to be a greater than that between editors and reporters. In this study, editors and publishers were in agreement on news play of environment stories (D=3.85, z=-.596, p=.2776), but editors and reporters were not in agreement on news play D=4.38, z=-4.73, p=.001). The difference between the two groups of agreement scores was also significant (z=-3.33, p=.001).

In the final hypothesis, editor own news play was predicted to be more congruent with how he perceived his publisher's news play than how he perceived his reporters' news play. The editor-

reporter congruency score was a D-score of 3.19 (z=-0.167, p=.8728 while the editor-publisher congruency profile produced a significant D-score of 3.12 (z=1.76, p=.0392).

As an adjunct to the coorientation study conducted here, the ten demographic variables collected became the predictor variables in a multiple regression model in which the individual accuracy D-scores between reporters and their editors were used as the criterion variable. D-scores in the criterion variable ranged from a high of 17.38 to a low of 7.21. None of the D-scores indicated any significant similarity between how the reporter thought his editor would play environment stories and how his editor actually played environment stories.

All ten of the predictor variables accounted for fifty-two percent of the variance in the regression model (See Table 2). Regression analysis exhibited three variables which had some relationship with the criterion variable: percent of newspaper environment coverage (r=-.36), city pollution index (r=-.33), and chained/independent status (r=.34). In short, the higher the city pollution index and the higher the previous column inches devoted to the environment, then the greater the similarity in news play exhibited between reporters and their editors in this study. However, these findings must be considered very tentative since none of the reporter accuracy D-scores were significantly similar to their respective editors. And, based on the regression findings, reporters working on chained newspapers tended to display greater D-scores (less similarity) than their counterparts on the independent papers in Indiana.

TABLE 2

COORELATIONS BETWEEN TEN REPORTER DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND POLICY ACQUISTION

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1) % environment coverage	0.0	.10	.25	.09	-.09	-.01	-.44[b]	.08	.11	.24	-.36[a]
2) Years in journalism		0.0	-.16	.85[b]	-.27	.80[b]	-.01	.12	-.01	-.15	.09
3) Journalism degree			0.0	-.04	.27	-.24	-.05	.02	.01	.15	-.19
4) Years in present job				0.0	-.06	.80[b]	-.09	.05	.01	-.12	.20
5) Education					0.0	-.10	.08	.11	.14	.13	-.02
6) Age						0.0	-.07	.18	-.01	-.22	.23
7) Newspaper circulation							0.0	.35[a]	.21	.19	-.00
8) Salary								0.0	.33[a]	.17	-.09
9) Chains vs. Independents									0.0	.25	.34[a]
10) City pollution index										0.0	-.33[a]
11) Policy acquisition score											0.0

[a] $p < .05$ [b] $p < .01$

Discussion

At the outset, this study was designed to compare publisher news play with the news play of reporters and editors in the newsroom. The major task was to determine if reporter news play mirrored the news play of his superiors. By utilizing the coorientation model and examining agreement, accuracy, and congruency scores, evidence

exists that reporters' news play differs from that of editors and publishers as far as the environment stories in this study are concerned. Reporter own news play was significantly dissimilar from editor own news play. Reporters' accuracy scores of how they perceived their editors story play and how editors actually did play stories was also significantly dissimilar, but reporters did feel that editors would play news as they (reporters) would play it.

Examination of editor performance illustrates the same results, only the editor sees the reporter as agreeing with him. Editor congruency was high, but his accuracy measure and agreement measure in relationship to his reporters were significantly dissimilar. As a result, both reporters and editors seem to be operating independently of each other, if the results of this study are to be taken seriously.

On the basis of this finding, it would seem as though reporters have news values which are not influenced by the newsroom environment. Such a finding would tend to dispute those leaning toward a role theory philosophy of reporting, in which the reporter is typified as a frustrated individual because he must sublimate his own feelings about stories to what he considers the "news wishes" of his editors. This finding would tend to dispute Geiber's a prior argument that external or internal pressures are forcing the reporter into denial of self (33). Judd stated early that reporters rely on their city editor's reflections of audience needs and desires in order to write the news. According to this finding,

such statements may need more investigation. Tichenor, in dealing with science writers, said that "specific editor interests" were a factor in reporter decisions. Again, the reporters in this study exhibited that they do not rely on their city editors in selecting environment news. Sigelman contended that Breed, in his early study, had overstated a policy conflict between editors and reporters. This study suggests that Sigelman may be correct since results showed that reporters experienced no policy conflict concerning environmental story selection, and because reporters operated independently of their editors.

Evidence from this Indiana study supports the findings of Flegel and Chaffee in two ways. The authors of the Wisconsin study found that although the intrinsic news values of stories were the most important factors to them, reporter personal opinions were more important to reporters than the opinion of their editors or audience. The coorientation measures in this study suggest that reporters do pay more attention to their own convictions than to those of their editors and publishers. Both reporter and editor accuracy and agreement scores were significantly dissimilar. Second, the regression findings, although tentative in this study, would indicate that intrinsic news values of stories are important to the relationship between reporters and editors. Reporter policy acquisition scores were influenced by the city pollution index and by percent of the newspaper's previous environment coverage, both factors adding to the news values of the stories on the instrument used in this study.

Coorientation between editors and publishers presented a different picture altogether in the newsroom. The editor congruency score indicated a real difference existed between the editor's actual news play and what he thought the publisher would actually play. The editor pictured himself quite apart from his publisher, but in actuality editor-publisher agreement scores indicated that their own news play was very similar. Seemingly, the editor has unconsciously assimilated some of the news values of his publisher.

When the editor is viewed in the context of the entire coorientation model constructed for this study, his role-playing potential would seem to increase. Early investigators had hinted that reporters could be role-playing in their news-gathering function. This study seems to suggest that editors could conceivably be the real role players in the newsroom hierarchy. And possibly, they have assumed these roles unwittingly. The editors in this study would be classified as lower echelon management, but as immediate supervisors to reporters, editors really interpret management to those under them. Conceivably, the editor here might be so far down in the management hierarchy that he really does not feel a part of management. He is in between, and as a result, he might be confused about his role. In this Indiana study, it is clear that editors were overestimating their knowledge of their reporters and underestimating their knowledge of their publishers. Such a finding could be pinpointing the artifacts of role confusion that confronts editors in the newsroom.

It was Swanson who suggested that in the newsrooms he observed, news was chosen by a consensus of newsroom personnel, including reporters. Everyone in the newsroom, at some time or another, was a part of the decision-making process concerning news. This Indiana study, along with the Johnstone study, suggests that reporters are not a part of the decision-making process. Johnstone found that reporters on smaller newspaper enjoyed greater autonomy than their counterparts on larger newspapers up to a point (i.e., as staff size grew to 100 autonomy decreased, but over 100 staff members autonomy again increased). Johnstone was not sure if such a finding was caused by the size of the staff or by the organization of the staff on chained-owned newspapers which comprised the majority of newspapers in his medium size grouping.

This Indiana study suggests, too, that coorientation did not exist for editors and reporters, but did exist for editors and publishers. Evidence indicates that degree of policy acquisition seems to be less of a problem for reporters on chained newspapers than for those reporters on independent newspapers, most of which were the smaller newspapers in this study. Although no significant correlation was found between circulation and policy acquisition, maybe researchers should look more specifically at policy acquisition on chained and independent newspapers as Johnstone hints in his study.

Finally, if there is consensus-taking concerning what is environment news in the Indiana newsroom in this study, then it is occurring between editors and publishers. Reporters do not seem to be a part of the decision-making process, at least not directly.

NOTES

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23. Rosten, op. cit., p. 226.

24. Breed, op. cit.

25. Sigelman, op. cit.

26. Ibid.

27. Breed, op. cit.

28. Robert L. Hiett, "A Multiple Regression Analysis of Some of the Factors Related to News Article Decisions of Air Force Gate-Keepers," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1970.

29. Thirteen editors were used because one of the newspapers had two editors of equal rank who shared the duties and responsibilities in handling reporters.

30. Newspapers, and circulations, chosen for the study in the low pollution class included: Bedford Times Mail, 13,787; Hartford City News-Times, 4,510; Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, 75,668; Michigan City News-Dispatch, 18,484. Medium pollution class: Anderson Herald, 20,247; Chesterton Tribune, 3,381; Gary Post-Tribune, 75,245; Muncie Star, 30,868. High pollution class: Frankfort Times, 7,499; Lafayette Journal & Courier, 43,534; South Bend Tribune, 115,453; and Valparaiso Vidette-Messenger, 11,161.

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